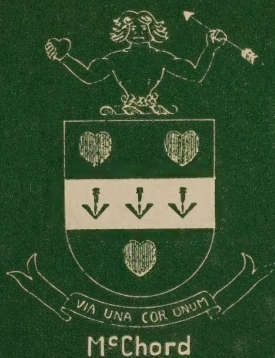


JAMES McCHORD

BY

JESSE HERRMANN, PH.D., D.D.



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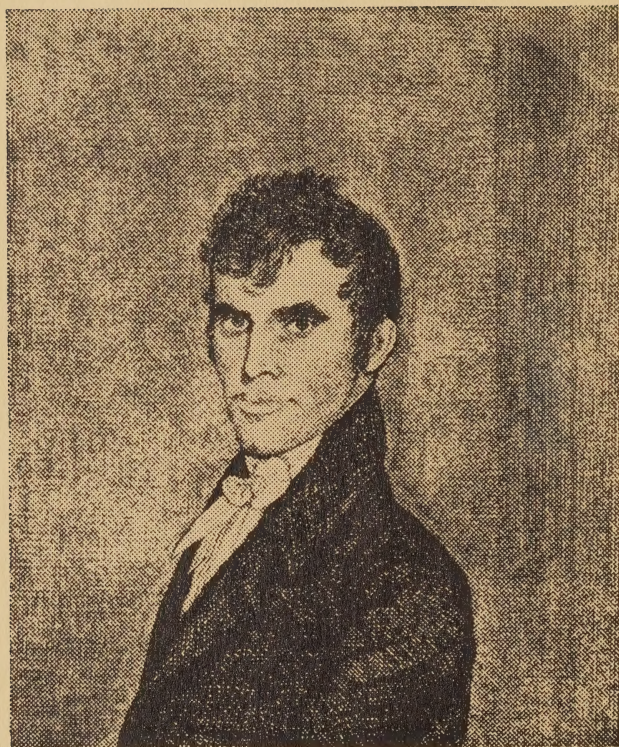
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James McChord--a portrait

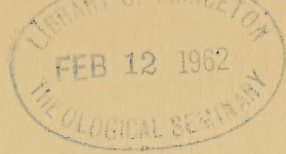
May this little
child of my pen
bring Christmas
greetings to
Charles R. Erdman

a cherished friend
an inspiring teacher
a devoted Christian
Foxuphan Jesse H. H. H.
Kentucky

1940



JAMES McCHORD



✓✓
JAMES McCHORD—A PORTRAIT

✓ By
JESSE HERRMANN, PH.D., D.D.
Minister, Second Presbyterian Church
Lexington, Kentucky

TRANSYLVANIA PRESS
Lexington, Kentucky
1940

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BY JESSE HERRMANN
Lexington, Kentucky

Printed In United States of America

To the Members of
SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Lexington, Kentucky

whose loyalty makes steady the painter's brush and whose devotion to the Christian ideals, with which this Church began and has continued for 125 years, is a constant challenge, this *Portrait* is affectionately dedicated.

APPRECIATION

Pigments for the palette have come from many hands. The mention of a few also expresses gratitude for the many.

The McChords, notable for achievement in many fields, have given invaluable assistance; Mr. and Mrs. C. Frank Dunn delved with profit into the musty tomes at the Court House; Rev. John W. Christie uncovered a vein of ore hitherto untouched; Rev. Thomas C. Pears, Jr. graciously made available all the resources in the Presbyterian Historical Society; Mrs. Charles F. Norton was equally generous with the treasures housed in the Transylvania Library; Miss Ruth Mathews read the manuscript; Mr. James Curry reproduced the McChord Coat of Arms; Miss Mildred Sensabaugh did the typing; Mr. Fred B. Wachs with deft dispatch disposed of many matters.

Footnotes and source-references do not embellish portraits. The reader, I trust, will be grateful that these have been omitted.

—J. H.

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COMMENCEMENT

It was commencement time at Lexington Academy in the year 1801. An eager throng crowded Mount Zion Church. The school and church, nurtured by Presbyterian pioneers, flourished under the same roof. The headmaster, Ebenezer Sharpe, was proud of his graduating class. In addition to the three R's his boys had mastered Greek, Latin, Shakespeare and the best prose. But interest and activity were not confined to the curriculum. Athletic sports, forensic contests and histrionic productions played an important role in this progressive school.

When the laurels were distributed most of them went to a "middle sized, delicate and slender boy." For the "convincing displays of his superior genius and talents" academic honors were bestowed. The high-

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est award for "school activities" was conferred in the words of one of his classmates:

"From his thirteenth year every thing about the Academy, except the instruction and discipline, was managed by him—all our sports, all our preparation for exhibition—the selection of the plays and speeches—the persons by whom they were to be spoken and acted, were all directed by him. Nobody assigned to him that business, and nobody charged him with assuming it, but he was always consulted, and his judgment was generally decisive."

The boy's name? James McChord: born in Baltimore, March 29, 1785. Five years later his parents migrated to Lexington. Little did they dream that this frail lad would become one of the first fully-trained ministers to be reared in Kentucky and would emerge as an outstanding figure among that early group of spiritual leaders. Nor did the headmaster realize that this bundle of dynamic nerves would be his part-time colleague

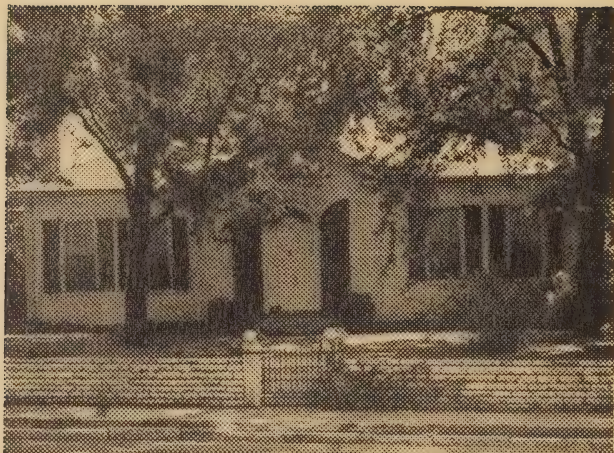
COMMENCEMENT

for five years (1813-1818) at Transylvania University and teach (of all things) astronomy. Much less could it have been anticipated that the headmaster would serve as a charter-Elder in the new Presbyterian Church which public spirited citizens would erect in 1815 to retain for Lexington the Christian leadership of this home-town boy.

But mercifully for parent and teacher the future was veiled; since it would have disclosed a final commencement in his thirty-fifth year, May 29, 1820, at which time this brilliant man's valedictory was not a speech but a song and a solicitude:

"Molly, Molly, Molly, (the name of his wife who was also at that time on her death bed) come here—look yonder towards Lexington. See what a glory is all around Lexington.

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie."



Upper—The Manse in 1815—450 North Limestone. “The Brick house built by the Reverend James McChord.”
(Deed Book, “R”, page 261, April 15, 1818)

Lower — The Manse in 1940—15 Mentelle Park.
Through the generosity of Elizabeth Taylor Curran.

AND HE GREW

A man grows in a manner not unlike the plant. The soil determines much, the seed more, the sun the most. Environment, heredity and the Light from afar make for human destiny.

SEED The McChord seed housed four dominant traits—physical frailty, artistic verve, relentless logic, and dynamic purpose. These four jumbled together promised genius, but only at the expense of a tension-torn life. And so it came to pass.

From early youth McChord was handicapped by an infirm body. One of his classmates in the Seminary, Rev. James Matthews, one time Chancellor of the University of New York, disclosed this fact years afterward as he wrote in reminiscent mood:

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“James McChord had a large and generous heart, though he had some infirmities of disposition which were troublesome alike to himself and his friends. He was a thoroughly devout man, and yet he was cheerful, and enjoyed a hearty laugh as well as any of his fellow students. He was subject to alternate elevation and depression of spirits—an infirmity that was undoubtedly aggravated, during his residence in the Seminary, by a diseased state of the body. The nature of his disease was such as to incline him much to drowsiness; and he would sometimes fall asleep when he would most wish to avoid it. One of our number was especially given to making long prayers. McChord, under the influence of his malady, would sometimes fall asleep during the prayer, and would have the mortification to find himself on his knees, when all the rest had risen.”

In addition to this chronic thorn in the flesh, he was afflicted with a fistula which constantly sapped his vitality. In mankind's long trek over the rough road of achievement, it is notable how often the insecure tents fall to the lot of the most brilliant pilgrims.

“Thou hast clothed me with skin and

AND HE GREW

flesh and hast hedged me with bones and sinews." So Job; but more to the point is the hedge of the heart and the mantle of the mind. In these matters nature dowered the McChord seed with a far more lavish hand. On the basis of native endowment he might have become a celebrated artist or a first-rate scientist. The delicacy of the poet was blended with the precision of the thinker. Tragedy lurked in this intimacy. When the bard and the sage graze the same pasturelands, strife among the herdsmen is inevitable.

This inner tension became more acute when the Light from afar destined this man to become a preacher. The artist and the philosopher can, and perhaps must, escape from the sordid sod of man's routine. Not so the minister; the detachment of the balcony is not for him. For better or worse he is wedded to the children of this world. McChord was a devout man but never a happy one, even though he did enjoy a hearty laugh as

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well as any of his fellows. "His voice was naturally full and clear and loud—indeed he never spoke in a low tone, even in common conversation." His case illustrates the law of compensation—stir on the surface to atone for dread in the depths. Not for him the prophet's pattern, whose step kept pace with the tempo of his spirit. "I shall go softly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul."

Frontier folk wear no gloves. They deal with men and matters in a rough and ready way. Among them a sensitive poet-preacher does not fare well. But the real artist can not be thwarted. Many an hour, stolen from a busy life, this man devoted to his palette and brush. They were golden hours for they restored his soul. During the intervening years his drawings and portraits have been treasured by the McChord family. His artistic urge also found creative release through the graphic pictures which abound in all his writings. "He possessed also a bold

AND HE GREW

and vigorous imagination and many of his conceptions were marked by uncommon originality and splendor.”

Only kindred spirits know the anguish in the artist's soul. “What is a poet?” asks Soren Kierkegaard. “An unhappy man who conceals deep torments in his heart, but whose lips are so formed that when a groan or shriek streams out over them it sounds like beautiful music. I tell you I had rather be a swineherd upon the flats of Amager and be understood of the swine than to be a poet and be misunderstood of men.”

But the mystic mood was not always the master. The regal intellect never abdicated its authority in the kingdom of the seed. The stern discipline of clear thought held sway over the unruly imagination. And then in turn the logician himself became over-bold. He ignored Bergson's constant warning “that the intellect is characterized by a natural inability to comprehend life.” In one of

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his letters McChord laments the fact "that he found it necessary to exercise great vigilance and some self-denial, in order to avoid giving his sermons too much of a metaphysical complexion." This uncanny power to compel an abstract idea to unload its cargo, deeply impressed all who came under the spell of his magic mind. A contemporary phrased it thus:

"Both his intellectual and moral constitution were strongly marked. In respect to the former, perhaps the most distinctive feature was the power of analysis. His mental vision was at once remarkably clear and remarkably acute, and perhaps he was never more at home than in endeavoring to draw the line between the true and the false in metaphysical speculation."

Legend has it that two main highways—the mystical and the metaphysical—lead into the promised land of truth. They are marked the head-way and the heart-way. Very clearly they are not two roads but merely parallel wheel-tracks. When the car of life has equal traction on both

AND HE GREW

sides, sanity and happiness abound. But when this balance is lost, discord looms on the horizon. It was McChord's misfortune that he could not resolve the tension between the head-way and the heart-way. His inner front thus impaired, he was no match for stern realities. No wonder he was often "morbidly sensitive and subject to alternate elevation and depression of spirit."

McChord was not a happy person but he was a dynamic personality. In every company he loomed large. He did not always follow a straight line, but he seldom missed the goal. A hard task he never shirked. In spite of his frail body, artistic temperament and intellectual aloofness, he was a man of resolute purpose when conditions called for decisive action.

On a summer's evening in 1814 McChord and "a highly valued friend, as well as fellow-labourer in the kingdom and patience of the Saviour" stand "near the foundation of Market-Street Church

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about the time of its commencement." The building program is ten months behind schedule. The difficulties are enormous, the delays disheartening. There is earnest conversation. Milton comes to mind, and an observation to the lips: "The man who succeeds in building up a church in this place, will have to pierce the rind of Leviathan; and he needs Ithuriel's spear." This indomitable man compelled the dream-church to become a reality. Ithuriel's spear—which caused everything it touched to assume its true form—supplanted the pen and the brush.

This tenacity of purpose derived from a long line of heroic ancestors. The blue blood of Scottish Covenanters coursed through his veins. A finer breed of men never walked the earth. Much of this sturdy stock was filtered and fibered by three migrations—to the north of Ireland, thence to America, finally to the western frontier. Every exodus is a selective process. The more stout-hearted leave the snug nest for exploits beyond the ranges.

AND HE GREW

Blood will tell. John and Isabella Caldwell McChord did well by their children. On their arrival in Lexington in 1790 the father was rated as "a mechanic in moderate circumstances." But skilled workmen and Scottish grit were at a premium; and so the family prospered. In due time this dour Scot invested \$2,000 in the education of his gifted son, James, whom he evidently named after a mighty chieftain, James McCorda of Argyle on the Isle of Skye, who fell in the battle of Killcrankie Pass during the revolution of 1689.

SOIL "Behold a sower went forth to sow." The crux of the parable is clear. In terms of harvest, soil is a major factor. In poor ground the best seed comes to little or no purpose. But there need be no quarrel between heredity and environment. Each in turn plays its potent part. The magic of the seed is matched by the marvel of the soil.

The McChord seed struck root in good

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earth. Lexington, at the turn of the century, was a fertile field for sturdy growth. Life on the frontier has a stimulus all its own. It makes short shrift of the weakling, and, by the same token, it compels the strong to exert every latent power.

It was under such rugged conditions that McChord spent his formative years. Gradually, however, the frontier conditions gave place to a new order. Lexington rapidly became the "Athens of the West" and a commercial and industrial center. Fifteen thousand people lived within easy reach of the city. First-class minds were found in all professions. Able and energetic men matched their wits in every walk of life. The air was electric with enterprise.

But not all the energies of the people were focused on material goals. Churches were built and private schools flourished. The University made available the latest discoveries in the educational centers of the world. Civic societies were organized and the political issues were hotly debated.

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Theaters presented good plays. Newspapers and books were published at a very early date. The Encyclopaedia Britannica was found on private shelves. Dr. John M. Mason, McChord's distinguished seminary professor in New York, on a visit to his former pupil, wrote to his wife: "The people are hospitable. They have no small degree of refinement at home, and none of that barbarian vulgarity abroad, of which we have heard much, and I anticipated some. They are very keen, sanguine and volatile; rather pugnacious on matters of opinion and party; and in this view, very impartial fighters about Lexington."

Within this cultural pattern the religious leaders played an important role. Those who came first were thoroughly trained. Among the Presbyterians were graduates of Scottish universities. But with the rapid increase of population it was impossible to meet the demand for trained ministers. Thus many men with

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very meager talent and preparation found their way into the pulpits. The damage done was often irreparable. It is to the credit of the Presbyterian Church that it persistently opposed this lax procedure.

During the first decade of the 19th century, Kentucky witnessed the most remarkable religious revival in American history. Its origin and significance have been discussed from every angle by many writers. The intense emotional hysteria produced physical and psychological reactions that stagger belief. But, as in all abnormal experiences, the fury finally spent itself and an enriched deposit of vital religion remained. When a deluge inundates the lowlands the prospect is bewildering; but, once the waters are again confined by the banks, the adjacent fields are found to be appreciably enriched. The "great revival" shifted the center of the pioneers' thought from man to God, from the material to the spiritual, from the things as they are to the things as they

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ought to be. Long after this spiritual upheaval ministers continued to debate abstract theological questions, but the tide had turned; the demand became insistent that forthright religion must come to fruit in conduct that is ethical and character that is above reproach.

Amid such cultural and spiritual soil, McChord matured. The extravagant fringe of the revival repelled him, but his heart and mind eagerly responded to the solid core of the Gospel.

SUN Apart from sunlight, seed and soil remain sterile. But with the kiss of the sun, millions of miles away, the earth bursts into fruit and flower. Such solar miracles defy human explanation. This subtle chemical process is an apt symbol of the divine impact upon the spirit of man. "The light that never was on sea or land" invades the human domain, and the course is changed, the goal fixed and destiny emerges. This "invasion"

JAMES McCHORD—A PORTRAIT

may come through many different human channels, and man's response to it, however it may come, is the tap-root of all religion.

James McChord was very fortunate in his many sunlit exposures. A Christian home, an evangelistic Church, and God-fearing teachers made his entrance into the Christian fold a natural and a normal process.

But the real struggle began inside the gates. At Transylvania he majored in the sciences, but his heart was set on a legal and political career. This brilliant mind and eloquent tongue promised rich reward in the field of politics. After two years at the University, he secured the much coveted opportunity to study civil law in Henry Clay's office. But "the hound of heaven" was still on his trail. The Church as well as the bar needed able advocates. An intimate friend has recorded the bare facts:

AND HE GREW

“In pursuing his legal studies with the celebrated Henry Clay, conscience, which had been enlightened by religious instruction, gave him much uneasiness, as he frequently had to devote part of the Sabbath to recitation. In about six months an occurrence took place which brought him to serious inquiry and deep conviction. All the powers of his mind, and all the feelings of his heart, were engaged in the great concern. This was in the spring and summer of 1803, and in the eighteenth year of his age. Eventually he made a profession of religion, quit the study of law, and turned his attention to the gospel ministry.”



THE McCHORD GRAVE

Dr. Charles McChord, Mrs. John McChord, Mr. John McChord, Mr. Hood McChord

IN WISDOM AND STATURE

Wisdom is a much larger assignment than education. A trained intellect can handle facts and figures, but only a wise man can master the moving stream of life. Yet the discipline of the school, more than any other one factor, makes for wisdom. In this respect James McChord made good use of every opportunity.

His diploma from the Lexington Academy definitely represented more solid learning than a similar certificate from our best high schools. The four years in Transylvania University not only put him in possession of the permanent body of literature and philosophy but also gave him a mastery of the notable achievements of science. Then, "under the care of the Presbytery of Kentucky", he went to New York City, where he spent four years in professional training.

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The year 1805 opened a new era in the history of the American churches. Before this date in all the United States there was not any such institution as is now commonly understood by a theological seminary. In many quarters pious intentions rather than sound learning qualified for the ministry. Where adequate preparation was demanded, the licentiate attached himself to a seasoned clergyman and “read theology” in the same way that a candidate for the bar “read law” with a competent attorney. Church statesmen long realized that this arrangement was woefully inadequate. The first permanent pattern for a better system was presented in 1805 by the Associate Reformed Synod which organized their Theological Seminary in New York City under the direction of Dr. John M. Mason, who became its life and animating principle.

In November of that year the Seminary (affectionately called “The Hall”) was opened with eight students. Among them were James McChord and Samuel Caruth-

IN WISDOM AND STATURE

ers from Lexington, Kentucky. They had been classmates at home and the four years in New York cemented a beautiful friendship. Caruthers later married McChord's sister and the two men kept up a life-long correspondence. Thirty-seven of the letters by McChord have been preserved (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia). They furnish invaluable source-material relative to the establishment of the Second Presbyterian Church in 1815.

Work at the Seminary was serious business. The day began at five in the morning and every hour had its assigned task. The Scriptures were studied in the original tongues, and during lectures "no authority was admitted but that of the Hebrew and Greek texts." During the last two years the English Bible was thoroughly mastered; lectures and sermons were prepared and delivered under the critical scrutiny of the professor. A note book, five inches thick, bears witness to McChord's diligence in the classroom. Amid the intervals of study, provision was

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also made “for such manly recreation as may preserve the tone of the animal system and prevent lassitude, debility and depression.” Failure in this department was construed “not only as an academical crime, but as a sin against God.”

At graduation McChord stood at the head of his class. His incisive mind, brilliant imagination and persuasive eloquence made a lasting impression. No wonder that some years later Baltimore and New York made overtures for his services. But the finest tribute came from Dr. Mason who made repeated efforts to enlist McChord as an associate in his own work. The only response was the naming of his first-born son, John Mason.

McChord was eager and happy to return to Lexington. To the end of his days the lure of Kentucky never lost its charm. There, too, after a very long absence, Mary Logan awaited him. They were married in July, 1809, and in the autumn of the same year he was licensed to preach. Two years later, having given satisfactory evi-

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dence of his ability and piety, he was ordained to the Gospel ministry.

Unfortunately in those days neither piety nor ability guaranteed a permanent pulpit. Congregations were small and far apart and, what was worse, felt but little obligation for the financial support of the church. Dr. Mason pressed this fact as one of the urgent reasons why McChord should come to New York. He writes with his accustomed vigor:

“In your western regions, and in too many others, they are lamentably hostile to a decent provision for the ministry. They may be improved, but not in season for YOU. Time will bleach your head, and death gather you to your fathers, before the accomplishment of such a revolution. Do not feed yourself with fallacious hope.”

But this plea fell on dull ears. Though the pay was pitiable, for five years he remained a roving preacher. For a hundred miles around Lexington he was a familiar figure astride his favorite horse, Rosinante.

However, his irregular appointments

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did not lessen the zeal for sustained study and careful preparation. His disciplined mind and Christian conscience would tolerate nothing short of the best. Revealing rays of light come from his casual letters to Caruthers during this period:

“I have been for the most part employed in reading Greek and Hebrew excepting so much time as has been taken up in discourse making and ministering to the handfull at Millers Run. Last week however I was almost entirely employed in modeling and executing a draught of a constitution for congregational libraries; to be conducted on the circulating plan; and to embrace, besides others, most books necessary to a ministerial library. Next week, if spared in health, I expect to go to Shelbyville and then to spend the residue of my time at Nicholasville. After that I suppose a whole summer in Ohio; if I can get Molly and John hoisted away. I have lately made a bold stagger for the Edinburgh Cyclopedia now printed in Philadelphia. It will cost \$4 per month for about two years. Although the constant small drafts will be hard on me, it will perhaps be the cheapest way to obtain a circle of history and science.”

IN WISDOM AND STATURE

To this plan for “congregational libraries” he gave much time and energy and some of the slender resources of his private purse. Far in advance of his generation, he clearly grasped the full import of what we now call Christian Education. Even before the Sunday school had come to Lexington he gave careful attention to the training of children in the faith and doctrine of the church. In one of his earliest sermons (*Strengthen the Things that Remain*) he elaborated on the obligation of parents in this matter:

“Let a stop be put to that shameful ruinous negligence about the religious education of children, which ordinarily marks such periods of decline. Let christian parents fulfill their baptismal engagements, by rearing up their little ones in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is too generally imagined by parents that if they lead their children the common round of catechetical exercises, they have done all their duty; and so averse are they even to this exercise that it is for the most part referred to others, or entirely neglected. . . . Be it remembered, that the God

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of all flesh has constituted the PARENT, not the teacher or the pastor, the guardian of little ones; and the man who would give over to another's care, that instruction of his child upon which most probably depends the unalterable issues of its fate, betrays a cold-blooded cruelty which might make a savage blush."

But it is even more significant that his program for Christian Education included the entire membership of the church. For robust Christian character, preaching and worship are not sufficient. Each member must be girded spiritually through private reading and study. The facilities of the congregational libraries made such personal endeavors possible.

In 1811 McChord became associated with the Rev. Robert H. Bishop, professor of Natural Philosophy and History at Transylvania University, in the publication of a religious monthly called the *Evangelical Recorder and Western Review*. From now on the printed page as well as the spoken word became a medium for the promotion of his ministry. He at once

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began a series of articles on the Atonement—a subject of endless theological controversy. These articles were revised and published in 1814 in a volume under the title, *The Body of Christ*.

The *Manual* of the United Presbyterian Church, of which body the Associate Reformed Church became a constituent part in 1859, gives a factual account of the consequences that followed the publication of this book.

“The design of this work was to harmonize the doctrines of a limited atonement and an unlimited offer of the gospel, which he did by propounding a new theory of the headship of Christ, in which he held that the atonement was made neither for all mankind, nor yet for the elect as such, although none but the elect would ever receive its benefits. But that it was made for HIS BODY—that body corporate, of which from time to time individuals become members by regeneration.

His Presbytery took exceptions to his theory, and in October, 1815, he was suspended from the ministry. He appealed to the General Synod but was unable, because of severe illness, to attend its meet-

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ing in May, 1816, and in his absence the Synod enjoined him to submit to his suspension until he could be heard. He submitted and appeared before the Synod in May, 1817, and defended himself in a speech of remarkable eloquence and power.

The Synod decided, 'That so much of the libel against Rev. J. McChord as goes to charge him with denying that any are represented in Adam who are not united to him by natural generation, thereby making representation consequent on natural generation; and so much of the libel as charges him with denying that any are represented by Christ in the covenant of grace until they are united to Christ in regeneration, thereby making representation in Christ consequent to regeneration, is relevant and true.'

He refused to submit further and declined the authority of the Synod, and in the autumn was received into the Presbyterian Church by the Presbytery of West Lexington."

In the light of this account some things become obvious. McChord was not, as some have asserted, a liberal or modernist. His suspension from the ministry in the Associate Reformed Church was not based

IN WISDOM AND STATURE

on a flagrant heretical position but on a hair-splitting distinction in a speculative sub-head of an undisputed doctrine. His attitude on the subject of "intercommunion"—and this involved no doctrine—classed him as a liberal only in church practice. He stood with the minority in his Presbytery in favor of sharing the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper with all Christians irrespective of their Church affiliations.

The truth is that McChord's suspension was primarily an unfortunate incident in church politics. There existed an ecclesiastical feud of long standing between Dr. Robert H. Bishop and the Rev. Adam Rankin, pastor of the Mount Zion Church. The irascible Rankin, considering Transylvania University too liberal, resented Dr. Bishop's connection with that institution. McChord consistently stood by his colleague in the faculty, and this fine loyalty eventually became a personal liability. It is also to the point that the Presbyterian Church—not noted as a sanctuary for the

JAMES McCHORD—A PORTRAIT

unorthodox—had no scruples in receiving the suspended minister into full fellowship. In one of his letters McChord relates his experience with the West Lexington Presbytery:

“After an examination of three hours, during which I generally turned to the essay and plea, and showed them that the doctrines were precisely opposite to those which they imagined, and after some squinting at Arminianism on their part, with reference to the conditionality of the Gospel offer, it was found that my heterodox view was the stiff ‘old side’ view of the Scotch Presbyterians; and no little merriment was excited in the house at the discovery of the respective grounds on which I and my examiners stood. . . . After two hours of storm and not less than three more of examination, they unanimously concurred in recognizing my standing and admitting me a member of their Reverend body.”

A man's full stature, however, can not be gauged exclusively by his professional career. The measure of a man is the sum of all his mandates. Apart from his church work, McChord had many lively

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interests. In particular the political arena never lost its fascination after the experience in Henry Clay's law office. He was well informed on all the issues of the day. His letters disclose many profound observations on the economic and political problems that clamored for solution.

The second war with England vastly multiplied the confusion. In the wake of financial ruin came deep-seated despair. Solid foundations must again be found. In this crisis "a fast day" was set apart early in 1815. To mobilize the spiritual resources of the Commonwealth, the State Legislature arranged a special religious service in Frankfort. But where was the man whose wisdom and power was adequate for this occasion? The Rev. James McChord, not yet thirty, was the speaker selected. The title of his sermon, afterwards printed and widely distributed, was *National Safety*. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Among the many factors that enlarged

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McChord's stature during this period, the association with his Alma Mater ranks among the first. His versatile scholarship enabled him in 1813 to accept the appointment as tutor in astronomy and optics. The lecture notes and drawings, which have been preserved, reveal a craftsmanship that indicates an effectiveness in the classroom second only to his power in the pulpit. A year later, while still in his twenties, he was elected to the Board of Trustees "in the room of Henry Clay." When one considers the many able and mature men available, this election was an exceptional honor.

He accepted this office with high enthusiasm. Many delicate and difficult problems were assigned to him for solution. Student discipline has always been a *bête noire* to college authorities. In this respect Transylvania University was no exception. On one occasion in particular young McChord's vote and influence helped to resolve what otherwise might have become a very serious situation. Moreover, college

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administrations must constantly deal with a captious public. By 1815 criticism of Transylvania could no longer be ignored. McChord was made chairman of a committee "to prepare an address to the public, giving a correct statement of the condition of the University for some years past, and the arrangements which they have made for its future prosperity." The "address" was a masterpiece and the Board ordered a large edition to be printed and distributed.

But the most annoying problem for a state-related school is an obstinate Legislature. (*De jure*, Transylvania was a state institution; *de facto*, a Presbyterian enterprise.) The blast came on December 29, 1815.

"Sirs: Agreeable to a resolution of the Legislature, their Committee have called upon us, as Trustees of The Transylvania University, for a communication of what in our opinion are the causes that have retarded its reputation, of its present standing, and of what benefit further legislative aid would be for the advancement of the institution."

JAMES McCHORD—A PORTRAIT

With another “address” in the saddle bag the Rev. James McChord and Major Alexander Parker departed for Frankfort. Their mission was a failure. Shortly thereafter, by act of the Legislature, the word *finis* was written after a notable Presbyterian chapter in the checkered history of Transylvania University. New and alien forces came into power. During Dr. Horace Holley’s administration (1818-1827) Transylvania reached its zenith, but, unfortunately, its nadir was also close at hand.

A recent writer on the history of higher education in Kentucky makes this significant observation:

“The Legislature at this point evidently intended to make a great state university of Transylvania and this act of the Legislature virtually ended the control of the Presbyterians of Transylvania. The spirit of the Presbyterians in the educational work of the new commonwealth, however, was not to be broken. They were to continue in other fields, but the history of higher education in Kentucky might have been an entirely different story had

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the Legislature of Kentucky not interfered with Presbyterian control of the institution at this point. Here was the making of a great university and an organization set up and in progress which would have resulted soon in an institution which would measure up in standard with other great educational institutions of the East, but the work of the Legislature stopped Presbyterian control. Things might not have been so bad had the Legislature given adequate financial support, but this it never did, and the constant shifting of control of Transylvania University from one religious group to another, coupled with the lack of state support, finally doomed the institution to remain a small college."

Most of the evangelical groups now withdrew their support from Transylvania and founded their own colleges. In 1819 the Presbyterians organized Centre College. The chairman of the Board of Trustees was General Isaac Shelby, first Governor of Kentucky. It was no small tribute when they elected James McChord as the first president of the college (March 4, 1820). But death intervened before he could be inducted into office.

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In 1818 McChord severed all official relations with his Alma Mater. But the “good mother” was not ungrateful to her devoted son. A master’s degree was conferred on him and the following resolution spread on the minutes:

“That the thanks of this Board be and they are hereby tendered to Mr. McChord for the able and correct manner in which he has performed his duties.”

The “Holley Controversy” has long since become a matter of history. The following letter by McChord, hitherto unpublished, dated February 20, 1816, has more than a passing interest:

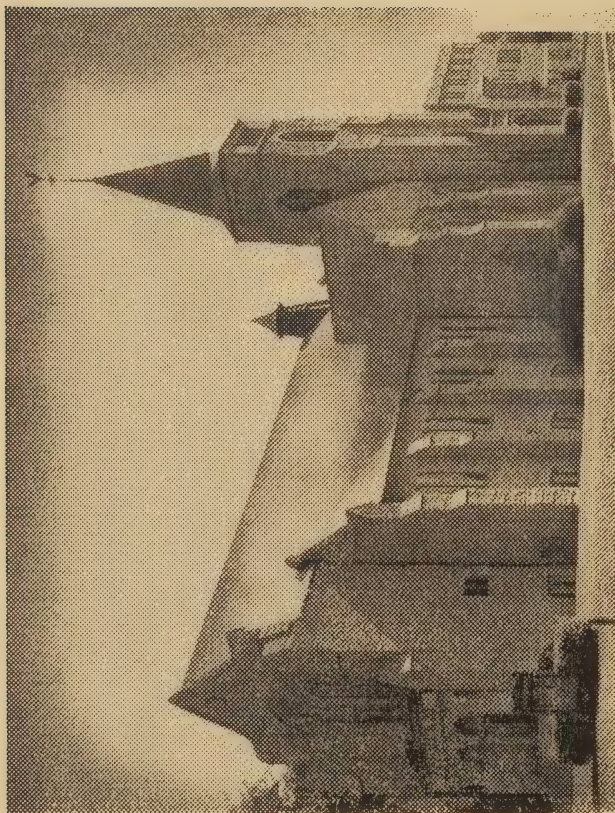
“Since December we have all been in hot water about the University, and as the prospects of many of us were materially involved, I have waited from week to week, under the almost daily expectation of being able to tell you the issue.

“The Legislature attacked it early in December at the instigation of ‘Free and easy’ for the purpose of displacing all the professors and moulding the thing to their mind. A bill passed the lower house (45 to 17) to displace all the Trustees; to elect

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hereafter yearly by a joint ballot of the two houses; to choose professors only for two years. The aim was to get a Mr. Holley of Boston—a Socinian of the worst order, and also a Universalist, whom a majority of the board elected sometime ago, and then upon second thoughts prevented from coming. The bill however was delayed in the Senate through the management of its opponents till the house adjourned. Probably however the thing will be renewed next session, and no such delay suffered as will balk it. Such a measure, if carried, will of course throw the present professors out of employment; and what their resource will be cannot be even guessed.

“As it is my fortune to have a hand in many scrapes, I of course fare badly here. The cry of Federalism and Presbyterianism was the thing raised against the board. It is my lot to frame the answer made to the committee of the house, and of course to have to myself at least ten-elevenths of the shout raised against the whole concern. What it may result in cannot be even guessed; but in all probability I shall be ere long ousted, or at least stormed out.”



THE "MCCHORD CHURCH" TODAY.

IN FAVOR WITH GOD AND MAN

From the Christian point of view no institution is merely the lengthened shadow of a man. In a manner not always discernible, the divine purpose threads itself through the affairs of men. This is true, in a very marked degree, of the Second Presbyterian Church, whose 125th anniversary called for a suitable *Portrait* of its founder and first pastor.

The first mention of this church by the historian is in the year 1824 in a chapter entitled *Churches in Lexington*:

“In the year 1813 and '14 measures were taken to build a Second Presbyterian house of worship. This house and the church and congregation connected with it were from the beginning, and have all along been the child of Providence. Often, while the building was progressing, did the faith of its most sanguine friends nearly fail. Various difficulties were to be encountered, yet by the good hand of

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our God upon us, they were removed, or made productive of great good."

As a preface to the story of the unique origin of the Second Presbyterian Church, I cite this quotation because it illustrates the truth that every Christian church is a "child of Providence" and not a creation of man. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Measured by events, McChord's career reached its major milestone in the year 1815. The three most important occurrences are revealed in a letter to his sister, Polly, wife of his intimate friend Caruthers, who had organized a church in Greenfield, Ohio.

"I can not but feel it as a matter most interesting as well as melancholy that while my mother just lived to afford us shelter till the day we got into our own house, so she just lived to witness the opening of that little church on which she had set much of her heart. The second day I preached in it she was on the bed of death."

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A mother gone, a church built, a home established. Add to this, suspension from the ministry—a jolting anti-climax to his fame as “fast day” orator in Frankfort—and you have a year crowded with pathos and drama. A letter dated February 3, 1815, crammed with personal information, gives also a preview of coming events.

“As for myself, I am pegging away in the old style. I ride to town every morning by ten, and am usually employed seeing or getting something about and for my house, or negotiating about our church, so that during these short days 1½ hours spent thus makes it nearly sundown when I get home, in most cases. Nothing has been done at the church since it was roofed, except getting out and working the flooring planks for the aisles. Wm. and David Logan engaged, about 20 miles off, all the rest of the plank; but none of it has been delivered yet. The carpenter therefore is now almost idle. The banks advanced him a stipulated sum, to go on with the work, and he is to receive nothing more till the pews are sold; so that were our plank only on, we might hope to see the church ready for plaistering by the middle of April. They talk of selling the

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pews before it is plaistered, and of letting my salary then commence; which would be to me a most favorable thing, as my house jirks and presses and puzzles me amazingly. Through the kindness of Providence however I have got on with infinitely less trouble thus far than any one would have supposed, considering the cost, and my poverty-struck circumstances.

"I was invited to preach the fast day sermon for our Ky. Legislature, who to my great astonishment presented me \$126. This sum was indeed but as a mote in the ocean of my difficulties; but it nevertheless had the effect of helping me considerably.

"Of the immensity of plank I laid in (upwards of 8,000 feet) a great portion has been stolen or otherwise disappeared. They have used already \$66.52 cts. worth of nails: and I calculate on \$30 worth more before all things are ready, and my back fence put up.

"However, I am by no means discouraged. A merciful Providence has so ordered it that I have never been dun'd twice for money by the same person. If I could get what is owing me I should not be a cent in debt to any body excepting the carpenter (to whom I have already paid \$270) and to J. Shaw and the two Banks. So

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that I shall have paid rather better than \$2,000, of which 850 are my own earnings, besides paying all bank interest, and clothing myself and family. I really often wonder, in looking back, how I have got along and paid so much; at the same time being myself badly paid; and out of employment too since last October; to which I must add a subscription of \$75 to our church.

“Our house will be ready for plaistering by the middle of March. But unless some new source of wealth should open, I must calculate on living in it without any of that except a coat on two rooms, till I get a little out of debt; if any such mercy should be in reserve for me. For the \$2,000 I have mentioned will be fully expended without calculating a dollar going that way.

“The children are well. Always muddy and always noisy.”

In spite of stolen lumber and the high cost of nails, the McChord home was ready for occupancy by August. The house, that “jirked and pressed and puzzled him amazingly”, has stood on North Limestone (No. 450) for a century and a quarter. Its sturdy simplicity, touched with beauty, is

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a permanent monument to its master-builder. For his recent volume on *Old Kentucky Architecture* Prof. Rexford Newcomb has fittingly selected the doorway of the McChord house as a frontispiece.

For five years after their marriage the McChords lived with his parents in the country. There the children were born—John Mason, who became a Presbyterian minister, David Logan and Mary Anne. At best this arrangement was an ordeal for Mary (Molly) McChord. She was always in frail health. Ever increasing duties called her husband away for long periods of time. Then, too, there was the perennial problem—a meager and irregular income. But she was a good manager. In times of adversity she was a real tower of strength. For us today the house on North Limestone is just another specimen of fine old architecture; for Mary McChord in 1815 it was a veritable paradise.

What a home is to a woman, a church is to a minister. For five years Molly had no hearth of her own and her husband no

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congregation. In due time McChord's devotion and energy provided the home, and his enthusiastic young friends established the church. This latter enterprise thrills with human interest.

Immediately after McChord's ordination in 1811, Major Alexander Parker "made the proposal to bind himself and others in bond with security, to pew and finish off completely the house in Lexington within two months from the date; and to raise me a good and sufficient salary; both of which to be done without requiring one cent from any person now a member or hearer of that congregation. This proposal was made to Mr. Rankin by Jesse Lamme which, in his low state of health, was expected to be very acceptable to him."

Not everything is clear in this quotation from one of McChord's letters, but with light from other sources a few certainties emerge. McChord knew nothing about this "proposal" at the time it was made. Long afterwards he writes to Caruthers:

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“Not before last night, did I ever correctly or fully learn how it was that this fuss about my wanting to oust Mr. Rankin started. It came into view in consequence of some new clash and most palpable lies—enormous outrageous lies from the quarter whence the wind bloweth.”

Since 1784 the Rev. Adam Rankin, pioneer Presbyterian minister of Lexington, had served the Mount Zion Church, where the McChords held their membership. Concerning this stormy petrel the charitable historian states that “he was encompassed with infirmities (not physical) at a time when ecclesiastical things did not always run smoothly.” Twice deposed from the ministry, he and his congregation were affiliated in succession with the Presbyterian and the Associate Reformed Churches, and finally became independent. It is easy to understand how such a man, no longer young and in poor health, should come to look with growing hostility upon the rising popularity of a brilliant young minister. It should also be stated, however, that McChord’s friends exercised poor

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taste, to say the least, if they actually made plans for a pulpit that was not vacant. On this delicate question no clear evidence is available.

It soon became apparent to those most concerned that, if McChord was to render a permanent ministry in Lexington, a new church and congregation would have to be established. By this time many prominent citizens had become vitally interested in the enterprise. The early commentators stress the fact that most of them were "non-professors of religion." But evidently they had sufficient spiritual insight to realize that a strong God-fearing man in the pulpit was no mean asset for a growing city. So they "undertook to build a place of public worship on the supposition that a congregation might easily be gathered to attend upon his ministry, allowing him to attach it to whatever church he saw fit. It was the man and not the denomination for which they cared."

With a dispatch that would do credit to a modern Chamber of Commerce, the

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movement was launched in 1813. An "association" was formed and a building committee appointed. Its membership was indicative of the type of the fifty-seven men who put their shoulders to the wheel: Chairman, John Tilford, veteran banker; Joseph Cabell Breckinridge, eldest son of the Hon. John Breckinridge, and father of General John C. Breckinridge; David Castleman, prominent merchant; John McKinley, financier; Major Alexander Parker, pioneer merchant, and Thomas H. Pindell, manufacturer. Energetically supporting this committee were men like Major William T. Barry, Abraham S. Barton, General Thomas Bodley, Joseph Bruen, Nathan Burrowes, General Leslie Combs, Major William S. Dallam, Farmer Dewees, Levi J. Gist, Thomas P. Hart, Richard Higgins, Andrew M. and Thomas January, Colonel Matthew Kennedy (presumably the architect and builder of the church), David Logan (McChord's father-in-law), General John M. McCalla, John McChord (father of James), James McCoun, Benjamin

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Merrell, Colonel James Morrison (generous patron of Transylvania), George and Stephen P. Norton, Dr. Wm. H. Richardson, Matthew T. Scott, Ebenezer Sharpe, Robert S. Todd (father of Mary Todd Lincoln), General George, Colonel James and Samuel Trotter, Robert Wickliffe and Charles Wilkins.

The association evidently had implicit confidence in their building committee, for the legal title of the property remained vested in the name of its chairman, John Tilford, until June 4, 1822, when it was transferred to the trustees of the church composed of William W. Blair, Greenberry W. Ridgely, Theodore F. Talbot, and Charles Wilkins, esquires. Officers were probably elected as early as January 31, 1818. On this date "a constitution or articles of agreement were formed when it was agreed that said association should be entitled, 'The Church and Congregation of Market Street, Lexington, Ky.'" The preamble to this constitution declared in general terms that, "an Association of

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persons was heretofore formed in the said Town for the purpose of erecting a house for the public worship of God.”

This preamble and official title clearly indicate that originally the church had no denominational earmarks. In fact it had no ecclesiastical affiliation until later in that year when it came under the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church. The following Elders were then elected: Joseph Cabell Breckinridge, William Henry, William B. Logan and Ebenezer Sharpe.

Shortly after McChord's death in 1820, as a tribute to his distinguished service, the legal name was changed to “The McChord Church.” For many decades it retained that name in popular usage even though it had been officially discarded on July 31, 1828, pursuant to the following “preamble and resolution”:

“We believe that the Resolution changing the name of this Church from Market Street to McChord was prompted by the best feelings of the human heart, but for a Presbyterian Church to bear the name of any man is unprecidentant (sic) and

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discordant with the sperit (sic) of Presbyterian ceremony. Resolved, therefore, That the name of the Church shall hereafter be designated and known by the name and style of the Second Presbyterian Church in Lexington, Kentucky."

During 1813 funds were collected, pledges made and plans matured. Writes McChord under date of July 5 of that year:

"Some of the Lexington people are bestirring themselves to build me a church in Lexington. Subscriptions have been taken in for two weeks. Some calculated on getting \$15,000. Others more rationally on \$5,000. But if they get \$3,000 they talk of going on. The first day they got \$700 subscribed by seven men."

Sufficient sums must have been secured, for by the next July the work was well under way under the daily supervision of McChord himself.

"The work goes on tolerably and but tolerably, partly because there are too few masons, and partly because the carpenter does not do his duty. The walls are about 10 feet high all around, so that the brick work is not quite half done."

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The last sentence, coupled with a statement by the historian, gives some clue to the physical appearance of the first church building.

“The walls were two and a half feet thick, the pulpit was in the middle of the front end of the house, and the seats were arranged in ascending tiers, facing the doors, so that persons entering found themselves confronted by an army of gazers.”

By 1815 the financial depression, incident to the second war with England, had played havoc with the business men in Lexington. The church building program was ten months behind schedule. On July 12, however, there appeared in the *Lexington Reporter* under the heading *NEW CHURCH* and over the signatures of the building committee a ponderous but informing announcement.

“The committee appointed to superintend the erection of the church in Market street, provided for the Ministrations of the Rev. James McChord, have at length the pleasure of announcing to the public the near completion of their task. The

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house will open for public worship the 30th inst.

“While issuing the present information, the committee cannot withhold from the numerous and solicitous friends of this little establishment their earnest congratulations on the success which has at length crowned the general wish, amid the darkness and difficulties of the times. Ten months have indeed elapsed since the undertaking was to have been completed; nor is it at this moment in the power of the committee to state that the whole of the plan committed to their oversight has been put in execution. To communicate to the exterior of the building, an appearance comporting with the elegance and symmetry of its interior arrangements and to prepare the gallery for the reception of auditors will require an additional expenditure of several hundred dollars. But on this additional expenditure the committee do not think of entering till they shall have witnessed the fulfilment of their present just and moderate expectations in relation to the object now respectfully announced. All that is necessary to the neatness and convenience of the lower and principal part of the edifice will be accomplished before the day already mentioned; nor do they anticipate any cause to shrink from the de-

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cisions of the taste and science which two or three weeks hence may honor them with the inspection of this portion of their work.

“To enable them to meet the numerous and pressing demands to which they have been subjected during the progress of the undertaking the appeal of the committee must be made to the liberality and piety of Lexington and its vicinity. The accustomed munificence of very many of their fellow citizens and the solicitude that has been unceasingly expressed for the arrival of the moment now at hand equally serve to strengthen their conviction that the appeal will not be in vain.

“It has hitherto been adverted to by casual visitors as a ground of just reproach to western towns that their ecclesiastical establishments have not been placed on that respectable and inviting footing which should at once enlist the finest and best feelings of the community, and levy the tribute of esteem from strangers. It depends in some measure upon the friends of this establishment to say how soon that reproach shall be wiped away. If it is left with them, as Kentuckians, to decide how far encouragement is due, predilection may advance no feeble claim.

“With a view to ascertaining as speedily as possible how far their anticipation of

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public support will be realized, they have appointed MONDAY the 31st inst. for the sale of Pews. The business of the day will be opened by an appropriate address from the Rev. J. McChord; to be preceded by such an exposition of the terms and principles of the sale from some one member of the committee as the circumstances of the case may require. It may however be proper to remark in general that the Pews will be disposed of to the highest bidder and that negotiable notes WITHOUT ENDORSERS will be required payable at 60, 120 and 180 days after date."

With a total membership of fifteen and an unlisted number of adherents the unfinished church was dedicated on Sunday, July 30, 1815. In the pulpit a "middle sized, delicate and slender man with piercing black eyes" faced a large and distinguished audience. It was a dramatic moment. What were his thoughts and emotions? Perhaps, as he saw the fifteen, he remembered that Another dedicated the Church Universal with a membership of only twelve. McChord took his text from Isaiah 49:6, "I will also give thee for a

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light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

The next day the pews were offered for sale. At the end of August, McChord found time to write to Caruthers about these two eventful days:

“Our church is yet unfinished. The lower part however was completed last week except the painting and pulpit stairs. It was opened in a much more backward state on sabbath 30th, July. And next day just one half the pews were sold at public auction for above six thousand dollars. From this however were to be deducted such subscriptions of purchasers as had been paid. Since that time about a dozen have been taken at the marked prices; and there are still 20 or 21 on hand. Of course we are still in debt about \$3,000. But considering the times, the pews went off astonishingly. The two middle tiers are mostly taken. The marked price of them was \$125, but at public sale they brought from 203 to 212. So that notwithstanding all the darkness and crashings of the times, the head of the church has given much ground to hope that even in temporal things the unfledged church building youth of

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Kentucky will not be suffered to lose by their adventurous undertaking."

For well nigh a century these "unfledged church building youth of Kentucky" have been under a cloud. Access to the McChord "Letters", which were not available to the early historians, completely disproves the charge of disloyalty. Davidson's *History of the Presbyterian Church* (1847) contains a brief biography of McChord. Most subsequent writers have perpetuated his views, even though the first biography in Dr. Bishop's *Outline* (1824) does not justify them. In the opinion of the writer, the following statements by Davidson do not give a true picture of McChord's experience with his congregation:

"He became the first pastor of the Market Street or Second Presbyterian Church. His preaching was very much admired, until it resulted in the conversion of some of his young and fashionable auditors; when the rest took the alarm, and a storm of persecution was raised against him by those who desired only entertaining

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preaching, and who exercised a controlling influence over the fiscal affairs of the congregation. Mr. McChord was made very uncomfortable, and was compelled to exchange his situation in 1819, for an academy in Paris. It might be truly said of this brilliant but unfortunate man, 'he asked for bread and they gave him a stone.' "

A careful study of the thirty-seven McChord letters does not reveal the slightest hint of disloyalty; on the contrary, while disclosing sore financial straits incident to the general depression, they voice high praise for devotion and perseverance. The following quotations, picked at random from various letters, are to the point:

"Times are becoming truly distressing in Lexington. The war . . . has occasioned already several extensive and destructive failures among our merchants—James McCoun and Company stand at the head of the list. . . . Indeed I was told lately that not more than five of the great trading houses in Lexington are expected to stand the tempest. These are principally the Trotter connexion. . . . The U. S. Bank owes Maccoun \$50,000 which they cannot pay. . . . 'Jerusalem shall be built up in troub-

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lous times.' Our little church is experiencing the lot of its mother. It is going on, though slowly."

"Lexington (I believe it to be a fair calculation) has lost one third of its inhabitants, whom want has driven away; and some of our first merchants, and other families, have either broken up or talk of breaking up house keeping entirely till times mend. David Castleman (for instance) keeps his family out at Mrs. Breckinridges . . . Should the war continue, times must grow much worse. The taxes to be raised are enormous in their amount."

"Times are said to be duller in Lexington than they were ever known to be, and threaten to grow daily worse. It is astonishing how little of that spirit and bustle and gaiety now appears which used to be seen every where. Every face wears a cloud. I trust however that that Providence which out of evil still educes good will turn it to such account as will speedily and happily declare itself."

"Times are indeed such as were never known in Lexington . . . Many of our moneyed men are said to be on the eve of breaking. And some whom you and I would have supposed (even in such times) beyond the reach of any such calamity are borrowing money at enormous interest.

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Indeed were it not that your state notes circulate here freely, there would be no medium of the kind. I speak most moderately when I say that ninety five of every hundred in circulation, here is Ohio money. These things bear hard on everybody. And will probably force Mr. Burrowes away, as it has already done many others."

That, in spite of these appalling conditions, his congregation remained steadfast is evidenced by these excerpts:

"My own affairs are in statu quo. The church very thinly attended. . . . They are as backward in the salary way. . . . And yet little blame can be attached to them, all things considered; several pew-holders have become insolvent. Others have left the place. And most (say two thirds) of those who remain have fully paid up their pew rents. But the whole amounts for each year to about half the promised salary."

"Matters, I think, are beginning to wear an aspect of some promise in our little congregation. There is better attention, more interest, and several strong indications of germinating piety. I begin to hope that I may yet see Market Street Church as remarkable for piety and christian intelligence, as it has been in its rise and whole

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history. Indeed every body is beginning to remark the change; though as yet we have no very palpable instance of it. It consists mainly in the general tone of feeling displayed and in the regularity and engagedness with which they attend. My 'Last Appeal', the little affair we are printing, has not, I trust, been without its good fruit already."

"The congregation is at this moment in a very promising way, and ought not on any account to be put in jeopardy. . . . Our little session is true and staunch; and a better of its size you have never known, no not even in New York." (This letter was written shortly before his resignation.)

During these trying years all the ministers in Lexington found it difficult to subsist. In sundry ways they supplemented their dwindling incomes. One of the pastors of the First Presbyterian Church had taken up the practice of medicine. But withal they did not neglect their churches. The spiritual morale of the community was maintained.

McChord turned to his pen. Many of his sermons were printed for wider dis-

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tribution. In 1817 he published *A Plea for the Hope of Israel*. The following year appeared *A Last Appeal*—a series of sermons preached in the Market Street Church. Also from the literary fruits of these years in 1821, for the benefit of his orphaned children, his friends published *A Volume of Posthumous Discourses*.

His writings, packed with clear thought and illumined by a fertile imagination, were much in demand. A contemporary affirmed “that no writings of the West have met with such an extensive and respectable patronage as his.” McCabe’s 1838 *Lexington Directory* lists this item:

“Second Presbyterian Church, generally called McChord’s Church in memory of the Rev. James McChord, whose printed sermons have lately been republished in England and received the highest encomiums from the best critics of that country.”

McChord was a schoolman as well as a preacher. In 1818 he lost his position at Transylvania University. The finances of the Market Street Church had not im-

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proved. Came an invitation to become principal of Bourbon Academy. He accepted the offer, resigned his charge and moved to Paris in 1819. The past strenuous years had taken a heavy toll of his vitality. His old malady returned. One day he fainted in the school room. His active days were over. Early in 1820 he returned with his family to the home of his father-in-law, David Logan, near Lexington. There he died on May 29, 1820. The *Reporter* carried the obituary notice:

“DIED. In this County, at 11 o'clock on Monday last, May 29, the REV. JAMES M'CHORD, formerly Pastor of the Market Street Presbyterian Church in this town, and more recently Principal of the Academy in Paris, Kentucky.

“Death of late has made melancholy inroads among the pious and useful men of our neighborhood. One after another is rapidly passing away and leaving a gloomy void behind. Mr. McChord was an eminent Minister of the Gospel, a man of talents, industry and zeal. He was endeared to a large circle of admiring friends, and had laboured with intense assiduity for the pro-

JAMES McCHORD—A PORTRAIT

motion of the interests of the church to which he belonged. With a mind of no ordinary character, he united a heart imbued with the most enthusiastic zeal, and glowing with the most ardent piety. His manner of preaching was impressive, often eloquent. His sermons were solemn, calculated to interest, animate and instruct. He wrote with uncommon energy and force, and his attainments were considerable, not only as a divine, but as a scholar. Such a man could not fail to be useful; by his numerous friends therefore his loss will be painfully and durably felt."

Dr. Robert H. Bishop conducted the funeral service on May 30, 1820, in the Market Street Church. His remains were deposited under the front of the Church and a marble slab in the back of the pulpit recorded the fact with this motto, "The resurrection of the just shall unfold his character." On Sunday, August 13, a memorial service was held in the Church. Dr. Bishop preached from the familiar text: "For we know that if our early house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made

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with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

When the Second Presbyterian Church abandoned its site on Market Street and erected its third building (dedicated December 21, 1924) on East Main Street, McChord's remains were removed to the Lexington Cemetery. There he rests by the side of two men who were close to him in life—Farmer Dewees and Colonel James Morrison. On Sunday, June 23, 1940, in the presence of a large company including two McChord families, the Second Presbyterian Church dedicated with impressive ceremony, a memorial stone at his grave. On it the simple facts are recorded:

JAMES McCHORD

1785-1820

FOUNDER AND FIRST PASTOR
SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1815-1819

“THE RESURRECTION
OF THE JUST
SHALL UNFOLD HIS CHARACTER”

JAMES McCHORD—A PORTRAIT

Through the pages of this book we have followed the footsteps of a valiant pilgrim. At journey's end it is fitting that his comrade and counselor, Dr. Bishop, should have the last word:

“He lived not in vain. He was selected by infinite wisdom, as the first of a noble host of native Kentuckians who in the morning of life, and at a period in the history of their country when the honours and the emoluments of this world were to be found every where but among the servants of the Cross, have deliberately devoted their substance, and their time, and their talents, and their literary acquirements, and their lives, to promote the eternal salvation of their fellow men. . . .

“Brethren, there is an heavenly inheritance to be secured. Let us direct our attention more steadily to it and to those objects connected with it. We profess to be traveling to that land of glory and peace, and we hope to spend in that land not only a few months and years but an endless eternity. Let us feel and act as

IN FAVOR WITH GOD AND MAN

heirs of immortal bliss. And then, whether we may be called to breathe our last, at home or abroad, among friends or among strangers, all will be well. The messenger of death will be the messenger of peace. And then

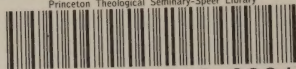
“Our flesh shall slumber in the ground,
Till the last trumpet’s joyful sound:
Then burst the chains with sweet surprise,
And in our Saviour’s image rise.”

APPENDIX

ROLL OF MINISTERS

Rev. James McChord	1815-1820
Rev. Robert H. Bishop	1820-1823
Rev. John C. Breckinridge	1823-1826
Rev. John C. Young	1828-1830
Rev. Robert Davidson	1831-1840
Rev. John D. Matthews	1841-1845
Rev. John H. Brown	1846-1853
Rev. Robert G. Brank	1854-1867
Rev. Edward H. Camp	1868-1869
Rev. George W. F. Birch	1870-1873
Rev. Robert Christie	1873-1879
Rev. George P. Wilson	1880-1884
Rev. William S. Fulton	1884-1901
Rev. Robert O. Kirkwood	1901-1905
Rev. Charles Lee Reynolds . . .	1906-1916
Rev. Benjamin Jay Bush	1916-1927
Rev. Jesse Herrmann	1928-

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